



THE EAGLE'S EYE

A publication of the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge

Spring-Summer 2012

History Revealed Through Fire

Travis Pollard, Forestry Technician

History was made—and re-discovered in February 2011. The St. Marks NWR fire crew happened upon pieces of what appeared to be old plane wreckage while conducting a prescribed burn northeast of the lighthouse. At the time of initial discovery, little was known about what type of aircraft it was, where it came from, how old it was, or what caused its untimely demise. However, the faded Star and Shield emblem visible on one of the larger pieces suggested that it could be a WWII-era military aircraft, giving us a solid time period to begin our research.

To aid in the investigation, Rick Kanaski, Regional Archaeologist with



Left to right: Former fire crew member Buddy Aguilera, Fire Management Officer Greg Titus, and Regional Archaeologist Rick Kanaski locate another piece of wreckage. (Photo: Travis Pollard)

the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Atlanta, visited the site to gather information and provide his professional input. With the help of a few fire crew members, Mr. Kanaski was able to examine the existing evidence, as well as locate additional pieces of the plane. By the end of his observations, Mr. Kanaski was confident that the debris belonged to a 1940s WWII-era aircraft but he wasn't sure about the specific model.

Naturally, we all wanted to know more about this plane and its crew.

To find out how Travis and the fire crew solved this mystery go to <http://stmarksrefuge.org/B17Crash.cfm>.

St. Marks loves Volunteers!
Call David Moody at 850-925-6121 to learn how you can help.

Photo Contest Winner

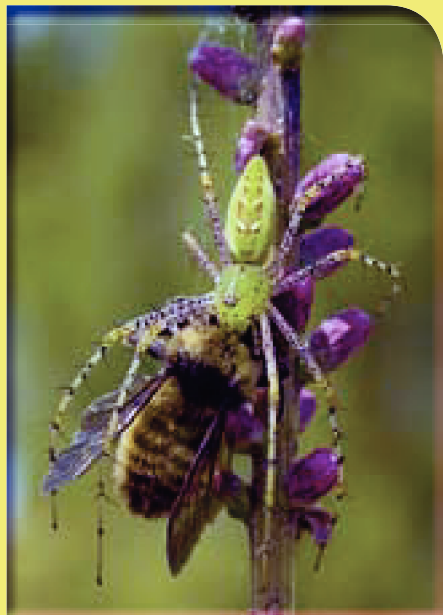


PHOTO BY CAROLE ROBERTSON
LYNX SPIDER WITH BEE
2011 BEST IN SHOW

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Spring Angling Action

David Moody, Refuge Ranger

With a mild winter behind us, the opportunity to catch predatory fish in both salt and fresh water could come early this spring. The return of baitfish on the grass flats in Apalachee Bay welcomes the redfish and spotted seatrout to their feeding grounds. The freshwater impounded pools and lakes across the refuge will become more active with largemouth bass and panfish eating the grass shrimp, crawfish, bugs, and frogs.

Ditch Fishing: Early spring is a great time to catch goggleeye (warmouth perch) and small panfish. Any sizeable ditch, lake, or river that held water all winter is a good candidate. St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge offers this type of habitat on Cut-off Road near Spring Creek and Primitive Walking Trail near

the Visitor Center. The Apalachicola National Forest is another great place to go when the Sopchoppy and New Rivers are low and confined to deep holes in the bends.

The Gear: I like an ultralight spinning rod, 4-pound test monofilament, very small split-shot, #8 hook, unpainted natural slip cork, and a pair of wading boots. Work your way carefully to the edge, trying not to sink in the gumbo mud, and place a juicy red wiggler in the deepest portion of the water. A freshwater fishing license is required by state law and 50 panfish is the daily bucket limit.

The Meal: The next tasks lead to the final reward of your fishing adventure. Scale, de-head, eviscerate, and place deep cuts one inch apart through the skin to the backbone of each fish. Liberally apply salt and black pepper and your favorite seasoning. Carefully heat a tall-sided iron pot, 1/3 full of lard or peanut oil to 390° (use a deep fry thermometer; lard handles the heat best). Shake the seasoned fish in cornmeal (I like Goya). Place carefully in the hot oil and cook until golden brown. When cooled pick up the fish by the tail with one hand. Carefully remove the dorsal and anal fin by pinching and applying constant pressure in a downward motion with your other hand. The fins should come clean from the main body, leaving only a backbone and rib bones. Hold the fish like an ear of corn and pull the meat away from the backbone with your teeth, enjoying each morsel. If the fish meets the three finger rule, you can eat the rib bones too!

Manager's Report

Terry Peacock, Refuge Manager

Good news on Land Acquisition. We now own 300 acres at the corner of U.S. 98 and Lighthouse Road. An offer is pending on up to 900 additional acres. These are exciting times for St. Marks. Please continue your support since we have a lot of acres remaining in our acquisition plan.

Most of you already know that this year's cohort of cranes was released on Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge. I was a part of the team that made this decision, and I feel that we made the best decision for the birds. The other option was to crate them and drive them to the two Florida Refuges. I did not feel that putting the birds in crates for the 7-hour drive was in their best interest. We were also concerned that the birds would not be able to pick up the migration route and would not end up back at White River Marsh in Wisconsin. Thanks to all who contributed to getting the pen ready this year; I know we can count on you next year. We will conduct an ultra-light lead migration next year if Operation Migration can assure the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership that they have a FAA waiver for next year by April



1. Keep up with the whooping cranes at Wheeler NRW <http://www1.flickr.com/photos/usfwssoutheast/>.

The Lighthouse transfer may be moving closer. I know you have heard this before, but this time I really think that it may happen. Areostar, the contractor conducting the clean-up, feels that they have met the Department of Environmental Protection's standards. We are waiting for the final report to reach the Coast Guard and then the transfer can happen. Keep a watch on the local media sources, including our Facebook sites, for updates.

Come out and enjoy your refuge this year!

Along the Florida Trail

Old, deteriorating boardwalks in a ½ mile section of the Florida National Scenic Trail (FNST) in the Spring Creek area have been removed. Five sections of boardwalk, each about 50 ft. in length, were deemed a safety hazard. Construction of new boardwalks is pending engineering and fund allocation. The initial engineering review is tentatively scheduled for March. The area is passable but muddy and could be very wet depending on tides and rainfall. Watch your footing if you cross at low tide. The ground is more solid off the beaten path.

Until new boardwalks are built, hikers can bypass the Spring Creek area:

Hikers traveling East to West: exit the trail at Spring Creek Highway (CR 365) and hike north 1.5 miles to Jack Crum Road (CR 375). Walk 4 miles west on Jack Crum Road to Purify Bay Road (paved and signed) and hike south 1.5 miles on Purify Bay Road to the trail intersection (Purify Bay Trail Head located nearby).

Hikers traveling West to East: exit at Purify Bay Road (unpaved), hike 1.5 mi north to Jack Crum Road (CR 375), go east on Jack Crum Road 4 miles to Spring Creek Highway (CR 365). The trail intersects Spring Creek Highway ½ mile south of Jack Crum Road.

The section of the FNST bypassed by this reroute represents some of the most diverse ecosystems and scenic vistas offered here. A short hike takes you through old growth pine, hardwood stands and coastal marsh land. The Marsh Point Camp Site (located at an old homestead) can be reached by traveling east approximately 2.0 miles from the Purify Bay Trail Head. Only a few bricks and timbers remain, but you can get an appreciation for what it was like to live in such incredible surroundings. For additional information, call Chris Weber at 850-251-8521. Have a great Hike!

Focus on Nature

Barney Parker, Refuge Ranger

Just finished reading Joe White's new autobiography, *Sweet Times, Sweet Places*. For those of you who don't know, Joe is the former manager of St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. He writes about his childhood growing up in rural Alabama and Mississippi through the end of his military service. This look back tells us how people lived in the 1930s and 1940s without indoor plumbing, electricity, and paved roads. Joe was raised on a farm and he recounts stories of his farm chores and escapades as kid doing a young man's work. In that era if kids were not in school, they made up their own games to play out of doors and were allowed to explore. They also had their own chores be it collecting eggs, milking a cow, or plowing. During this period, Joe also lived in a lumber camp where his step-father led a crew cutting stands of old-growth longleaf pine.

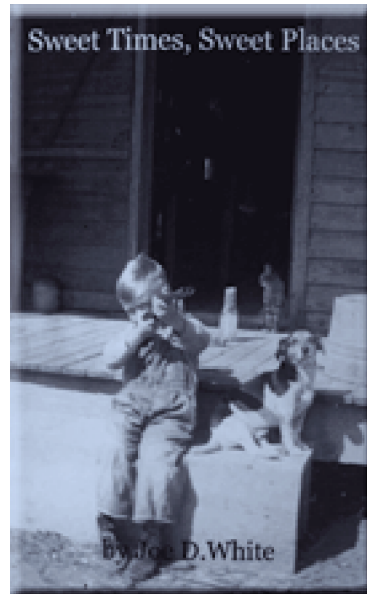
The striking thing about this book, to me, was his descriptions of lumber mills decimating the longleaf pine forest. When the Europeans settled this country, the long leaf pine forest encompassed 93 million acres of the southeastern coastal plain from Virginia to Texas, and into Central Florida. Biologists say it was one of the biggest ecosystems, if not the biggest ecosystem in the world. Introduced in the early 1900s, the concept of managed forests grown in rows rather than natural regeneration partially led to the destruction of the longleaf pine woods. By the 1960s, wildlife managers realized that the 3 million remaining acres could not sustain the ecosystem. Three million acres sounds like a lot but remember that 90 million acres were gone.

Restoring this vital and important ecosystem has become a priority for St. Marks NWR. Many longleaf seedlings have been planted. Equally important, fire has been returned to the landscape to mimic the historical seasonal burns.

Joe's early life formed his love for nature and led to a career with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. I asked Joe if he was going to write a sequel. He said he's working on his adventures on several southern refuges as well as his 36 years as manager of St. Marks. Joe's book is available online at <http://www.blurb.com>.

On another topic, come to one of the free digital photography class that I teach on the first Saturday of each month in Nature's Classroom from 9:00-11:00 a.m. Weather permitting, we'll take a 1-hour tour in the new electric tram after the class to practice what we've learned. Call 850-925-6121 to register for the class.

Sweet Times, Sweet Places



Whooping Cranes – From December 2011 to February 2012

Christine Barnes and Gordon Perkinson St. Marks NWR/Operation Migration Volunteers

A December wind blows hard. It is cold and grey in an unforgiving winter landscape in central Illinois. The whooping crane migration is at a stand-still – awaiting a gentle northern breeze to help the migrating cranes and their brave ultralight pilots find their way to St. Marks NWR in Florida.

We join the migration team here to volunteer on the remainder of the trip to St. Marks. Our task is to visit schools along the migration route and share with students and teachers the extraordinary story of this reintroduction project, created and now led by Operation Migration (OM) staff.

The weather remains harsh. The cranes make minimal progress, finally crossing into Alabama where more bad news hits: the Federal Aviation Administration is investigating the licenses of the pilots who have served in this capacity for more than a decade, these pilots who have reintroduced more birds into the wild than any other project of this nature. The migration grinds to a halt.

We continue to visit schools, where many teachers and students eagerly follow the cranes' progress, just as they have for a decade. We also visit schools where teachers and students have never heard the story. We tell of our experiences as crane handlers, and watch as the wonder of it all begins to sink in, and the hope of this mission envelopes their hearts and minds.

In early January, the FAA grants a waiver until the migration is complete. We leave the migration team to come to St. Marks, a month late, to fulfill our promised volunteer commitment and await the arrival of the cranes. Preparations are in full swing for their arrival, perhaps only a week or two away. Alas, that is a human agenda. Following several more days of weather challenges, the cranes make it clear to the OM team that their migration is over. In February the OM team releases the Class of 2011 at Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge in Alabama. A new chapter begins.

Some birds from the Class of 2009, the first year that St. Marks NWR participated in the reintroduction project, have returned to the area and are dispersed among other wild cranes. Some reside not far from the refuge. Citizens in northern Florida and all along the migration route anticipate news of a Class of 2012, yet to be hatched. After all, only three years have passed since OM introduced the cranes into this area. Whooping cranes are not yet fully established in the wild. The reintroduction project led by Operation Migration has not yet run its course. The mission is not yet fulfilled; promise and hope remain alive.



Photos courtesy of Lou Kellenberger



Two whooping cranes, male 11-09 and female 15-09, both spent their first winter at St. Marks NWR, and have returned to spend this winter south of Tallahassee.

Watch for Wildlife - March to September

This is a general guide to seasonal wildlife events. Check the sightings log in the Visitor Center for the most recent information.

March – Warblers and shorebirds migration begins. Alligators can be seen on warm days; females will begin building their nest. Large flocks of white pelicans migrate through. Spring wildflowers begin blooming.

April – Ospreys and red-cockaded woodpeckers are nesting. Eaglets begin to fly. Warbler and shorebird migration slows down. Mississippi and swallow-tailed kites return.

May – Purple gallinules can sometimes be seen in East River Pool and Headquarters Pond. Woodstorks can be seen in Headquarters Pond. Osprey are feeding and shading their chicks. Red-winged blackbirds are nesting.

June – Wild turkey broods are exploring the forests. Adult does may be seen with spotted fawns. Ospreys, red-cockaded woodpeckers, purple gallinules and common moorhens can be seen with their fledglings.

July – Large flocks of white ibis, and tree swallows can be seen along Lighthouse Road. Herons and egrets can be seen in the refuge ponds.

August – Alligator eggs begin hatching. Blue-wing teal and bald eagles begin to return for winter.

September – Fall wildflowers are blooming and many butterfly species are present.



Make the most of your visit to St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge

The refuge Visitor Center is located on County Road 59, three miles south of U.S. 98. Stop in to view the interpretive exhibits, purchase a daily or annual pass, and shop in the bookstore. Restrooms are available here and at the Picnic Area. Visitor Center hours are weekdays 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and weekends 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The refuge is open from sunrise to sunset.

Entrance fees – Daily pass \$5 per car or \$1 per bike or the annual pass for \$15. These Federal passes are accepted: America the Beautiful, Senior or Golden Age, Access or Golden Access, and the Federal Duck Stamp. All passes can be purchased at the Visitor Center during business hours. Daily and annual passes and Senior passes are sold at the toll booth on weekends.

Wildlife Observation – The 7-mile Lighthouse Road provides several stopping points to observe wildlife. All levees can be used for cycling, walking, and horseback riding but portions may be seasonally closed. Fall, winter, and early spring are the best times to get on the trails. Maps are available at the toll booth and at the Visitor Center.

Slow Down! The posted limit is 15 MPH around the Visitor Center and 35 MPH on Lighthouse Road. Wildlife, boaters, cyclists, anglers, birders, photographers, and hikers all share the road.

Picnic areas – located near the restrooms on Lighthouse Road and also at Otter Lake in Panacea.

Fishing – Freshwater and saltwater fishing are available in certain area of the refuge. The saltwater boat ramp near the lighthouse is open during daylight hours. The Refuge Fishing Brochure with complete information is available in the Visitor Center and toll booth.

Hunting – Hunting is permitted for resident game species on specific dates fall – spring. Hunt brochures are available at the toll booth, the Visitor Center, and online <http://www.fws.gov/southeast/pubs/smkhnt.pdf>. Go to <http://www.fws.gov/saintvincent/hunt-fish.html> for hunting and fishing information on St. Vincent NWR.

Summers are hot and humid so bring insect repellent, sunscreen, proper clothing, water, and snacks. Potable water is available in the Visitor Center only. Other than chocolate bars sold in the Nature Store, food is not available on the refuge.

Bring field guides, spotting scope, binoculars, and/or a camera. Loaner binoculars and bird guides are available in the Visitor Center. Birds and most mammals are more active in the morning and evening.

Be aware of poison ivy, thorny vines, biting insects, and snakes. Do not feed or approach any wildlife.

Pack out what you pack in – don't leave it behind.

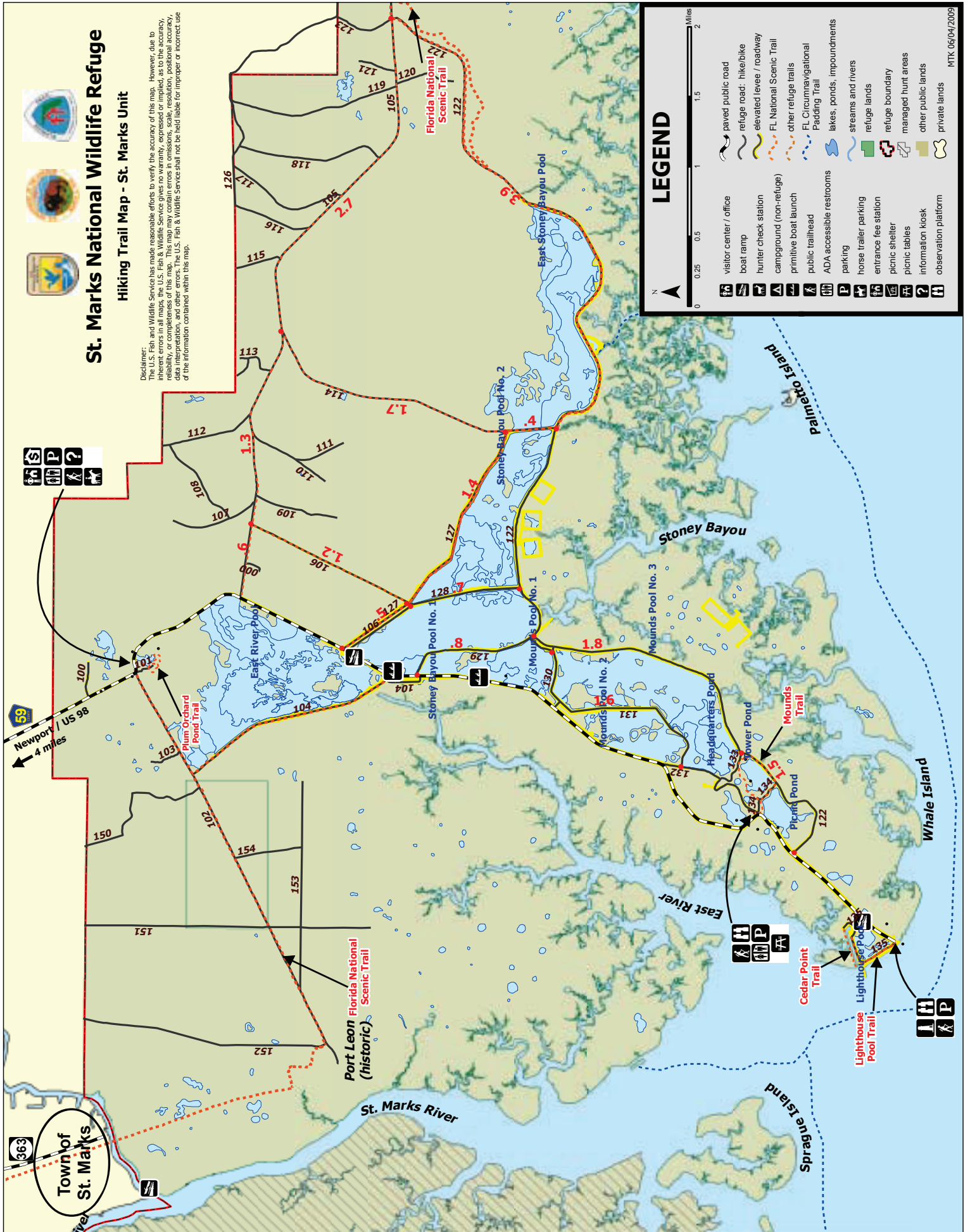
Enclosed cooking fires are allowed in designated picnic areas only. Open fires are not permitted.



For the safety of wildlife and pets all pets must be leashed and under the owner's control at all times.

Collecting or taking artifacts, natural features, animals, or plant from federal property is not permitted.

Our new electric tram can handle 10 passengers with clear plastic curtains that can be lowered in unpleasant weather. We're reducing our Carbon Footprint!



Wildfire Potential Outlook – Spring and Early Summer 2012

Jennifer Hinckley, Prescribed Fire Specialist



The potential for wildfires in Florida is high this year due to drier than normal conditions. Many areas in Florida that were already dry will become significantly drier as plants take up soil moisture for spring growth. These drought conditions could cause any wildfire to be hotter and last longer than in wetter years. Since more plants and organic soils may be consumed during a wildfire, more smoke could be produced in the general vicinity. Sometimes a large wildfire will send smoke to neighboring counties or farther depending on wind conditions.

Prescribed fire, or controlled burning, is a useful tool for preventing devastating wildfires. St. Marks and St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuges have a strong

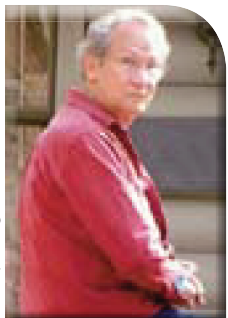
prescribed fire tradition. Prescribed fire mimics wildfire except the fire staff controls the when and where of a prescribed fire based on predetermined objectives and careful consideration of many factors such as weather, roads, and neighbors. These fires reduce the amount of fuel – buildup of dead leaves, limbs, vines, and grasses – that can cause a wildfire to become, well, even wilder.

Prescribed burning returns only a fraction of the fires that historically occurred in our landscape. Some people wonder if lightning strikes were really common enough to maintain frequent fires. In fact, lightning strikes started fires every one to three years. With modern development there are fewer acres of pine grassland so there are not as many lightning struck fires. However, lightning strikes are responsible for upwards of half of Florida's wildfires.

At St. Marks and St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuges, the fire staff have been preparing for the potential wildfire season. Fire equipment and fire fighters are ready to respond locally and nationally, if needed.

St. Marks NWR Photo Club

Tom Darragh, President



The Photo Club looks forward to meeting and sharing photos in the new Education Building and several exciting photo safari trips are being planned.

We always want your input and ideas for both. May is a busy month with our annual picnic – food, fun and photography – and the beginning of our next photography show at the Tallahassee Senior Center.

Keep an eye on the Web site or our Facebook page for information on the opening night reception – food, fun and photography. Notice a theme? Some photographers like to eat as much as we like to take pictures, but it's all fun.

One of our founding members, Gene Vincent, enjoyed our outings of food, fun and photography. He passed recently and will be missed greatly. One of his favorite photos, an aerial view of the St. Marks lighthouse and surrounding grounds, will be displayed at the Senior Center. He had the privilege of going up in a

P51 for his birthday and was so proud of this photo taken from the plane. We hope you will all come to see the exhibit.

If you have any questions or would like to be added to the e-mail list please contact Tom Darragh at thomasd@talstar.com. Visit us on Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/SMNWRPC>

As always, get outdoors and enjoy our refuge, take lots of photos and come to a club meeting and share them with us.

Photo Tips

1) When shooting moving objects, pan with the subject by moving your camera along with their motion. You'll get the subject in focus and the background will be blurred.

2) Be respectful when photographing wildlife. Most animals have a safe zone. If they start moving away or change their behavior, back off. Never feed wild animals or use calls to lure them in.

Winners of the 2011 Photo Contest are:

ADULT:

Best of Show: Carole Robertson *Lynx Spider with Bee*

SMALL WONDERS:

First Place Amy Cloud *Monarch*
 Second Place Judy Lyle *Monarch Butterflies*
 Third Place Lois Hostnick *Just let me Bee*
 Honorable Mention Jean Marani *Winter Wonderland*

LANDSCAPE:

First Place Judy Lyle *Favorite Perches*
 Second Place Neil Hostnick *At Dawn's End*
 Third Place Carole Robertson *Lighthouse at Sunset*

WILDLIFE:

First Place Gordon Cloud *Eye of the Beholder*
 Second Place Carole Robertson *Searching for Food*
 Third Place Karen Willes *American Bittern*
 Honorable Mention Marilyn Van *Dusseldorp Are you looking at me*
 Honorable Mention Lois Hostnick *Sunset Glow*
 Honorable Mention Judy Lyle *Osprey*

YOUTH DIVISION:

SMALL WONDERS:

First Place Audrey Hebner *Spring flower after rain*
 Second Place Tia Nicholson *Narrow Escape*
 Third Place Diana Robertson *Crabs*
 Honorable Mention Loren Scott *And then there was one*

LANDSCAPE:

First Place Clay Cloud *Sunset*
 Second Place Glendon Cloud *Sunset on the bay*
 Third Place Loren Scott *Lighthouse on Sunny Day*

WILDLIFE:

First Place Diana Robertson *Fishing*
 Second Place Joan Robertson *Drying in the Sun*
 Third Place Clay Cloud *Red Head*
 Honorable Mention Audrey Hebner *Florida Soft Shell Turtle on land*

All winning photographs are on display in the Visitor Center and are posted on the St. Marks Refuge Association's Web site <http://www.stmarksrefuge.org>.

St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge Facts:

- St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge was created on October 31, 1931 as the St. Marks Migratory Bird Refuge under the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Biological Survey
- St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge encompasses about 70,000 acres spread along 43 miles of the coastline of Wakulla, Jefferson, and Taylor counties
- St. Marks Migratory Bird Refuge became St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge on July 25, 1940
- Nearly 18,000 acres of the St. Marks Unit were designated Wilderness in 1975
- St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge is one of more than 550 refuges plus 38 wetland management districts
- The National Wildlife Refuge System, managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, protects more than 150 million acres for wildlife, cultural and historical sites, beautiful landscapes, and outdoor public recreational activities
- Wildlife comes first on America's National Wildlife Refuges

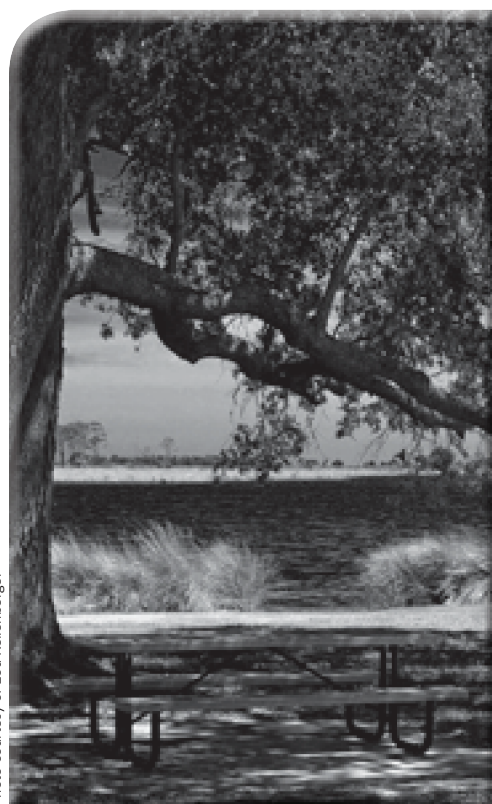


Photo courtesy of Lou Kellenberger

St. Marks NWR Calendar of Events March – September 2012

Call 850-925-6121 for reservations or more information. Visit <http://www.facebook.com/SMSVNWRS> for the latest refuge news and events

MARCH 2012

Sat. Mar. 3 – Photo Class, 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. in Nature's Classroom with 1-hour tour if weather permits – Instructor Ranger Barney Parker – for all levels of digital photographers. Reservations are required.

Sat. Mar. 3 – St. Marks Refuge Association, Annual Meeting – 11:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. in Nature's Classroom.

Sun. Mar. 4, First Sunday at the Refuge – 2:00 p.m. Nature's Classroom, "The Fungus Among Us: Mushroom Basics" will Bill Petty. Learn about the fascinating world of mushrooms and why they are so important.

Sun. Mar. 4, History Tour – 3:30 p.m. Meet at the Visitor Center parking lot. Ranger Andy Edel leads a short walk on the Cedar Point Trail to the site of the original Lighthouse. Learn about a shipwreck and Civil War era Fort Williams. Federal Troops landed at the lighthouse on this date in 1864. Reservations are required.

Thurs. Mar. 8 – Tots on Trails – 11:00 a.m. meet at Nature's Classroom for a 45-minute for a ranger-led walk and short activity for pre-school children. Reservations are required.

Thurs. March 15 – pools open on St. Marks Unit for hand-launched boats. Access gates open for fishing in the Panacea Unit until May 15.

Sat. Mar. 17 – St. Marks NWR Photo Club – 9:00 a.m. at Nature's Classroom for a meeting or photo safari – a different adventure each month. Check the St. Marks Photo Club Facebook page or contact Club President Tom Darragh at thomasd@talstar.com or 850-556-3477 for details.

Sat. Mar. 24 – Families in Nature – Bring your family to Nature's Classroom anytime between 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. for "Geo-caching" activities and crafts.

Fri. Mar. 30 – 9:00 to 3:00 p.m. Open House at St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge – tours and hikes on the island. (Rain date is April 20).

APRIL 2012

Sun. April 1 – First Sunday at the Refuge – 2:00 p.m. Nature's Classroom, Topic to be announced on Facebook and e-mails.

Sat. Apr. 7 – Photo Class – 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. in Nature's Classroom with 1-hour tour if weather permits – Instructor Ranger Barney Parker – for all levels of digital photographers. Reservations are required.

Thurs. April 12 – Tots on Trails – 11:00 a.m. meet at Nature's Classroom for a 45-minute for a ranger-led walk and short activity for pre-school children. Reservations are required. Last program until October.

April 10 – 14 – Spring Gobbler Hunt in the Wakulla and Panacea Units.

Sat. Apr. 21 – St. Marks NWR Photo Club – 9:00 a.m. at Nature's Classroom for a meeting or

photo safari – a different adventure each month. Check the St. Marks Photo Club Facebook page or contact Club President Tom Darragh at thomasd@talstar.com or 850-556-3477 for details.

Sat. Apr. 21 – Kid's Fishing Clinic – 9:00 a.m. – Noon at Wooley Park in Panacea. For boys and girls age 4 – 15 with a chaperone.

Sat. and Sun. Apr. 21-22 – Florida Lighthouse Day and Panhandle Lighthouse Challenge. Activities at all 5 historic lighthouses – St. Marks, Cape San Blas, Crooked River, Cape St. George, and Pensacola. Activities at St. Marks Lighthouse from 11:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Tours of the St. Marks keeper's house, from 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. on Sat. and Sun.

Sat. Apr. 28 Families in Nature – Bring your family to Nature's Classroom anytime between 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. for ranger-led crafts and activities on Creepy Critters!

MAY 2012

Sat. May 5 – Photo Class – 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. in Nature's Classroom with 1-hour tour if weather permits – Instructor Ranger Barney Parker – for all levels of digital photographers. Reservations are required.

Sun. May 6 – First Sunday at the Refuge – 2:00 p.m. Nature's Classroom. "All about Red-cockaded Woodpeckers" with refuge biologist Michael Keys.

Tues. May 15 – Access gates closed Panacea Unit.
May 16 – August 6 – St. Marks NWR Photo Club Exhibition at the Tallahassee Senior Center "Beauty of St. Marks NWR". The Opening Reception is Fri, June 1 from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Sat. May 19 – St. Marks NWR Photo Club Annual Picnic. Contact Club President Tom Darragh at thomasd@talstar.com or 850-556-3477 for details.

Sat. May 26 – Families in Nature – Bring your family to Nature's Classroom anytime between 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. for ranger-led crafts and activities on Water Wonders! Last program until September.

JUNE 2012

Fri. June 1 – Opening reception for the St. Marks NWR Photo Club Exhibition at the Tallahassee Senior Center "Beauty of St. Marks NWR" 5:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Sat. June 2 – Photo Class – 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. in Nature's Classroom with 1-hour tour if weather permits – Instructor Ranger Barney Parker – for all levels of digital photographers. Reservations are required.

Sun. June 3 – First Sunday at the Refuge – 2:00 p.m. Nature's Classroom. "Turpentine and Naval Stores" with Barbara Hines from the Florida Public Archaeology Network.

Sat. June 16 – St. Marks NWR Photo Club – 9:00 a.m. at Nature's Classroom for a meeting

or photo safari – a different adventure each month. Check the St. Marks Photo Club Facebook page or contact Club President Tom Darragh at thomasd@talstar.com or 850-556-3477 for details.

JULY 2012

Sun. July 1 – First Sunday at the Refuge – 2:00 p.m. Nature's Classroom, Topic to be announced on Facebook and e-mails.

Sat. July 7 – Photo Class – 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. in Nature's Classroom with 1-hour tour if weather permits – Instructor Ranger Barney Parker – for all levels of digital photographers. Reservations are required.

Sat. July 21 – St. Marks NWR Photo Club – 9:00 a.m. at Nature's Classroom for a meeting or photo safari – a different adventure each month. Check the St. Marks Photo Club Facebook page or contact Club President Tom Darragh at thomasd@talstar.com or 850-556-3477 for details.

AUGUST 2012

Sat. Aug. 4 – Photo Class – 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. in Nature's Classroom with 1-hour tour if weather permits – Instructor Ranger Barney Parker – for all levels of digital photographers. Reservations are required.

Sun. Aug. 5 – First Sunday at the Refuge – 2:00 p.m. Nature's Classroom, Topic to be announced on Facebook and e-mails.

Sat. Aug. 18 – St. Marks NWR Photo Club – 9:00 a.m. at Nature's Classroom for a meeting or photo safari – a different adventure each month. Check the St. Marks Photo Club Facebook page or contact Club President Tom Darragh at thomasd@talstar.com or 850-556-3477 for details.

SEPTEMBER 2012

Coming this fall: September – Coastal Cleanup, Families in Nature programs return; October – Monarch Butterfly Festival and return of the First Sunday and Tots on Trail programs.

Sat. Sept. 1 – Photo Class – 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. in Nature's Classroom with 1-hour tour if weather permits – Instructor Ranger Barney Parker – for all levels of digital photographers. Reservations are required.

Sun. Sept. 2 – First Sunday at the Refuge – 2:00 p.m. Nature's Classroom, Topic to be announced on Facebook and e-mails.

Sat. September 15 - St. Marks NWR Photo Club – 9:00 a.m. at Nature's Classroom for a meeting or photo safari – a different adventure each month. Check the St. Marks Photo Club Facebook page or contact Club President Tom Darragh at thomasd@talstar.com or 850-556-3477 for details.

Notes from Nature's Classroom

Lori Nicholson, Environmental Education Specialist

I am proud to say that St. Marks NWR is ahead of the game again. What we have been doing for years has finally become important and realized nationally. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar and the Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced in a news release on February 27, 2012, their agreement to use National Wildlife Refuges as classrooms and catalysts for 21st Century Education. According to my calculations St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge has reached over 47,031 students and adults in environmental education and outreach since 2008!

"An economy that's built to last requires that we make sure our children get the education and training they need so we have a workforce ready to take on the jobs of tomorrow," said Secretary Salazar. "This innovative partnership will help schools use our national parks, wildlife refuges and other public lands as educational and professional development tools to bring

new environmental and historical knowledge to students and develop skills for the next generation of workers in America's growing outdoor economy."

"Science, technology, engineering and math fields are driving forces in the global economy," said Secretary Duncan. "Partnerships between our nation's schools and our national parks, wildlife refuges and other public lands are a smart approach that can better prepare our children in STEM subjects by providing engaging, hands-on learning experiences, making lessons tangible, and enhancing schools' ties to their communities."

Our new building has been extremely busy since it opened in September 2011; it is a wonderful place to bring children in inclement weather when we cannot use our 68,000 acre outdoor classroom. Students and teachers alike have expressed their admiration of the new building.

We have hosted school children for field trips, families at our Families in Nature Programs, parents and pre-school kids for Tots on Trails and hundreds of people at our festivals. We have provided four professional workshops for in-service teachers and have others in the planning.

The building is open on the first Saturday of the month for our Wildlife Photography Class, and the third Saturday of the month for Photo Club Meetings, Families in Nature is on the 4th Saturday of the month, Tots on Trails is the second Thursday of the month, and the First Sunday of the month provides exciting interesting guest speakers on local topics of interest. Check our Web site www.fws.gov/saintmarks for more information or call 850-925-6121.

I hope to see you at the refuge or at one of our wonderful events. I am very proud of the refuge and what we have accomplished.

Endangered Yellow-headed Parrot Report

St. Marks Refuge Biologist Michael Keys recently traveled to Belize to work on an unprecedented project installing artificial cavities in living trees for the endangered yellow-headed parrot (*Amazona oratrix*). Read his report about this amazing journey.

In short, the trip was intensely beautiful, physically challenging, eye-opening, culturally mind-blowing, and the principal work site in far southern Belize was extremely remote. Years of rough work putting in similar artificial cavities for red-cockaded woodpeckers, months of preparing equipment and travel plans, and lady luck on our side was just enough to make everything work smoothly and avoid catastrophe in the pines.

Although we had to purchase brand new equipment, we donated the chainsaw and climbing ladders to the monitoring and protection staff at Payne's Creek National Park. The first reports say that six cavities are already being worked on by parrots in preparation of breeding season! Mario Muschamp, terrestrial manager at Payne's Creek, (and totally awesome Creole chef) will be working diligently with his staff to monitor ten nest boxes and five "drilled" cavities (carved directly into the pine tree with the chainsaw bar) throughout the nesting season. We have hopes of publishing some preliminary information about this heretofore completely untested technique (for parrots) and what we hope are some first-season success stories.

To make sure everyone knows these parrots are not mythical creatures and just some great excuse to enjoy 85 degree weather in January, you can find a video of a pair of parrots calling in the pines here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_bprOdxbmUE&feature=related



Wild Wisdom

Gail Fishman,
Refuge Volunteer

"Nature is a part of our humanity, and without some awareness and experience of that divine mystery, man ceases to be man." *The Outermost House*, Henry Beston

Born in 1888 in Quincy, Massachusetts, Henry Beston was 38 years old when he decided to spend two weeks at his 2-room cottage on Cape Cod in September of 1926. He could not bring himself to leave; his two week stay lengthened into a year during which he kept journals of his observations, thoughts, and experiences. Melding the seasonal rhythms and the creatures that pass by or inhabit the meeting of land and sea, Beston compiled a slender book of exquisite words relevant today. He was captivated by the changing light, sounds, and movements of birds, grasses, and sea. He marveled at large black and orange butterflies flirting over the dunes in October – Monarchs!

Although we are far, far away, St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge shares the seasonal ebb and flow of tides, wind, birds, light, sound, and even monarch butterflies with Cape Cod. Beston reminds us to experience ever-changing nature to keep in touch with our humanity.

You can pick up a copy of *The Outermost House* in the St. Marks Refuge Nature Store.



Nature Store Buzz

Betty Hamilton, Refuge Gift Shop Volunteer

NEW ITEMS OF INTEREST:

Whooping Cranes mugs: a white mug with a black design of the cranes following an ultra-light - \$5.95

Water bottles in red or blue with the oval lighthouse design in white. These are BPA-free and made in the USA - \$3.50 each

NEW ADULT BOOKS INCLUDE:

The fully revised and updated Sixth Edition of the National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America - all 900 species, including 23 new species.

The National Geographic Backyard Guide to the Birds of North America is a user friendly guide on attracting and identifying the birds most likely to visit backyards, food and feeding of birds, and ideas for landscaping and gardening for attracting migrating birds.

Chasing the Ghost Birds: Saving swans and cranes from extinction by David Sakrison.

Best Native Plants for Southern Gardens: A Handbook for Gardeners, Homeowners, and Professionals by Gil Nelson.

Smithsonian Handbooks Mushrooms – “a concise guide to identification...” to over 500 mushrooms.

FOR CHILDREN, NEW BOOKS INCLUDE:

Miss Rumphius by Barbara Cooney – when she was a child Miss Rumphius’ grandfather told her she must do something to make the world more beautiful. What will she do?

The Skull Alphabet Book by Jerry Pallotta and Ralph Masiello –The answers to whose skulls are pictured and sketches of the US presidents are hidden in the book!

Nature’s Yucky: Gross Stuff That Helps Nature Work by Lee Ann Landstrom and Karen I. Shragg. Want to know what bee barf is? You’ll find the answer in this book. Plus many more.

Crab Moon by Ruth Horowitz is the story of a boy who learns about the natural history of horseshoe crabs. It is a National Science Teachers Association Outstanding Science Trade Book for Children

And always the coolest selection of nature-themed t-shirts.

Note from the past: On August 1, 1944 the Tallahassee Daily Democrat reported that the rainfall for July 1944 was 9.58 inches.

St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge
P.O. Box 68
St. Marks, FL 32355
(850) 925-6121
www.fws.gov/saintmarks
www.stmarksrefuge.org

SMRA President's Report

Betsy Kellenberger, SMRA President

Spring is here with incredible outdoor opportunities, and the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge is the place to go for hiking, biking, bird-watching, boating, fishing, and photography. The Nature Store in the Visitor Center is packed with great items to enhance your visit to the refuge. Come on down and enjoy the beautiful weather!

The St. Marks Refuge Association held its Annual Meeting and Volunteer Recognition Luncheon at Nature's Classroom on March 3. Awards were given to those volunteers who have given their time and talent to help support the refuge in the Nature Store, in the Visitor Center, on the trails, at the crane pen, at special events, on the Web site, and behind the scenes with many other tasks. This meeting was the first of many to come in the new education building. We are planning some volunteer training days to acquaint interested folks with volunteer opportunities at the refuge.

All members of SMRA should have received their annual renewal letter in February. Please renew and continue to support the refuge with land acquisition, biological and educational goals, lighthouse restoration and special events such as the Monarch Festival. Mail in the renewal form with your dues and any other contributions you may wish to make. Your renewals are much appreciated!

We are looking for new members and will be holding some members only events this year. Look for the upcoming events on Facebook @ St. Marks Refuge Association and on our Web site <http://www.stmarksrefuge.org> where you will find the calendar of events, news about First Sunday presentations, children's activities, photo classes, and the St. Marks NWR Photo Club. Remember that members always receive the newsletter and 10% off in the Nature Store. Tell your friends and family about the activities at the refuge and urge them to become members too!

St. Marks Refuge Association Membership Application



Please check membership:

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------|---|----------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual/Family | \$25 ⁰⁰ | <input type="checkbox"/> Student (under 16) | \$10 ⁰⁰ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior (over 62) | \$20 ⁰⁰ | <input type="checkbox"/> School Class | \$15 ⁰⁰ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Profit Group | \$50 ⁰⁰ | <input type="checkbox"/> Life | \$250 ⁰⁰ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Support | \$200 ⁰⁰ | <input type="checkbox"/> Patron | \$1000 ⁰⁰ |

Name:		
Address:		
City:	State:	Zip:
Phone (home):	Phone (office):	
Email:		
Gift Membership: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		Memorial Membership: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Gift for:	In memory of:	